

REMARKS

By this Amendment, Applicants amend claims 1, 2, 5, 9-11, and 16, and cancel claims 6 and 12, without prejudice or disclaimer of the subject matter thereof. Claims 1-5, 7-11, and 13-16 remain pending.

In the Office Action, the Examiner objected to claims 6, 12, and 16 as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but indicated that these claims would be allowable if rewritten in independent form. The Examiner rejected claims 1-5, 7-11, 13, and 14 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 5,564,015 to Bunnell ("Bunnell") in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,513,124 to Furuichi et al. ("Furuichi"); and rejected claim 15 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Bunnell in view of Furuichi and U.S. Patent No. 6,317,840 to Dean et al.¹

Applicants thank the Examiner for pointing out the allowable subject matter of claims 6, 12, and 16 "for the reasons set forth in the previous Office Action." (Office Action at 5.) Nevertheless, Applicants respectfully traverse the Examiner's objection and rejections. However, in order to expedite the prosecution of this application, Applicants have incorporated the allowable subject matter of claims 6 and 12 into independent claims 1 and 9, respectively, and rewritten claim 16 in independent form including all of the limitations of base claim 1 and intervening claim 14.

Further, Applicants also have amended claims 1, 2, 5, and 9-11 to be consistent with these claims as considered by the Examiner in the previous Office Action mailed June 6, 2006, which set forth the allowability of claims 6, 12, and 16. Therefore,

¹ The Office Action contains a number of statements reflecting characterizations of the related art and the claims. Regardless of whether any such statement is identified herein, Applicants decline to automatically subscribe to any statement or characterization in the Office Action.

amended independent claims 1, 9, and 16 are now in condition for allowance. Because claims 2-5, 7, 8, 14, and 15 depend from claim 1, and claims 10, 11, and 13 depend from claim 9, claims 2-5, 7, 8, 10, 11, 14, and 15 are also in condition for allowance at least for being dependent from an allowable base claim. Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of the objection and the Section 103(a) rejections of claims 1, 2, 5, 9-11, and 16. Further, because claims 6 and 12 have been canceled, the objection to claims 6 and 12 is moot.


In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and the timely allowance of the pending claims.

Please grant any extensions of time required to enter this response and charge any additional required fees to our deposit account 06-0916.

Respectfully submitted,

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